



RCSI

Postgraduate Scholars Code of Conduct

2025-2026

RCSI DEVELOPING HEALTHCARE LEADERS WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE WORLDWIDE

Contents

Principle 1	1
Principle 2	2
Principle 3	3
Principle 4	4
Principle 5	5



RCSI

RCSI Code of Conduct

As a postgraduate scholar of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI), you are preparing to develop a research career in the Health Sciences or to enhance your professional development training in a range of health and allied professions. During your education and training you are obliged to abide by a set of standards. The Code of Conduct (“Code”) outlines the defined standards and the principles by which you must abide in the research, academic, health profession, clinical or other training environment.

You must formally agree to abide by the Code. Every student is personally responsible under the Code for their own acts or omissions. Compliance with these standards is considered as evidence of fitness to study and practise.

The Code applies throughout the scholar’s time in RCSI, whether engaged in university activities or otherwise.

Repetitive breaches of the Code will be cumulative.

Sanctions are the responsibility of RCSI and will be applied through the RCSI Disciplinary regulations. A breach of the Code could render you liable to action under the RCSI Disciplinary Regulations with sanctions imposed on you up to and including expulsion.

The Code is based on five core principles:

1. Act according to the highest ethical principles at all times.
2. Demonstrate professional responsibility and behaviour.
3. Develop and maintain a high level of competence.
4. Be accountable for own actions and self-care.
5. Be aware of your obligations under the Code of Conduct and do not do anything which constitutes a breach of the Code.

RCSI takes seriously any breach of the Code. If your behaviour fails to meet the standards outlined in the Code, for any reason, the matter may be reviewed in accordance with RCSI’s Disciplinary Regulations.

The following information is to direct you on the proper use of the Code in terms of your relationships and interactions with staff, fellow students, placement tutors, patients, carers, and all other individuals with whom you come into contact.

Principle 1

- **Act According to the Highest Ethical Principles at all Times:**

As an RCSI postgraduate scholar you are required to adhere to internationally recognised ethical principles and practices in the conduct of your research and/or postgraduate study. These include but are not limited to adherence to regulations; good stewardship of research on behalf of others; avoidance of plagiarism or misrepresentation; avoidance of research misconduct; appropriateness of authorship; duty of care to self and others; compliance with GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and/or patient confidentiality where applicable; compliance with ethical approval practices and accountability.



RCSI

As a scholar you must:

- 1.1 Be honest and trustworthy.
- 1.3 Take responsibility for your work, studies, and behaviour.
- 1.4 Commit to being honest in the collection, analysis, and reporting of findings from your research or programme of study.
- 1.5 Not participate in, condone, or allow yourself to be associated with dishonesty, misrepresentation, or fraud.
- 1.6 Only take credit for work that you have done or generated and, where appropriate, give due acknowledgment when referring to the work of others.
- 1.7 Ensure research data is stored appropriately in line with RCSI policies and relevant legislation.
- 1.8 Demonstrate Academic Integrity while refraining from any activity which constitutes academic misconduct including plagiarism and contract cheating.

Principle 2

- **Demonstrate Professional Responsibility and Behaviour:**

As an RCSI postgraduate scholar, you are part of the broader RCSI community and as such are expected to conduct yourself with integrity and professionalism. Demonstrating respect for the dignity, views and rights of others is fundamental in forming and maintaining appropriate relationships with academic and administrative staff, fellow scholars and other individuals with whom you come into contact. When engaged in patient care, the care of animals or humans involved in research, you must be guided by your responsibility to act in the best interests of all concerned without the influence of any personal consideration.

As a scholar you must:

- 2.1 Learn how to work in partnership with others in RCSI and its associated centres.
 - 2.1.1 Behave in a trustworthy and professional manner.
 - 2.1.2 Act with civility, dignity, and respect towards all with whom you come into contact for your research/studies, both at RCSI and at its associated centres.
 - 2.1.3 Recognise diversity and respect the cultural differences, values and beliefs of others. Behave in a manner that demonstrates respect for equality and diversity. Do not engage publicly in degrading comments about others that include culture, nationality, ethnicity, colour, race, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability, size, socio-economic status, civil status, or family status.
 - 2.1.4 Refrain from behaviour that includes intimidation, foul language, threats of violence or retaliation.
 - 2.1.5 Listen to, and respect the opinions of others and be non-judgemental in your attitudes toward them.
 - 2.1.6 Demonstrate appropriate respect for the knowledge, insight, experience and expertise of others and be aware of the limitations of your knowledge and skills.



RCSI

2.2 Demonstrate professional and academic standards.

- 2.2.1 Where ethical approval is required for the conduct of research, you must ensure that appropriate ethical approval is obtained in advance of the study.
- 2.2.2 Exercise appropriate care and confidentiality in the collection, recording and storage of research or other data including complying with GDPR legislation.
- 2.2.3 Keep clear, accurate records of all research in ways that will allow verification and replication of your work by others.
- 2.2.4. Avoid any conflict of interest and make relevant parties aware of any potential risk of having your judgement influenced by your personal interests.
- 2.2.5. Share your data and findings openly and promptly, as soon as you establish priority and ownership claims. This applies to dissemination in poster, written report, oral, thesis or any other format.
- 2.2.6 If you become aware of any incident of irresponsible research, you must inform the relevant authorities within RCSI.
- 2.2.7 Ensure any funds you are responsible for are used for the purpose they are intended.

2.3 Protect the reputation and identity of RCSI.

- 2.3.1 Behave in a manner that does not bring yourself, others or RCSI into disrepute, including online activity and the use of social networking services.
- 2.3.2 Avoid using the RCSI identity to promote self-interest that is not in keeping with the values, rules, statutes or interests of RCSI.
- 2.3.3 Engage with third parties under the supervision of an RCSI supervisor only.
- 2.3.4 Decline gifts or incentives in any form and do not engage in any commercial exercise that might harm the reputation of the research endeavour of RCSI.

Principle 3

- **Develop and Maintain a High Level of Competence:**

Competence, the overall integration of knowledge, skills and abilities into professional practice, is dynamic and demands that you keep abreast with change in order to maintain and continually develop your competencies. You must do this by engaging in continuing professional development.

As a scholar you must:

- 3.1 Make a judgment as to whether you are competent to carry out a particular role or function.
- 3.2 Acknowledge any limitations of competence and refuse in such cases to accept delegated or assigned functions, particularly when engaged in activities that involve patients or research subjects.
- 3.3 Take measures to develop and maintain the competence necessary for professional and research practice.
- 3.4 Ask for help and support when experiencing difficulties related to your learning and research.
- 3.5 Use every opportunity to learn. Attend classes. Be punctual. Be contactable. Plan and use your time effectively,



RCSI

- 3.6 Reflect on feedback about your performance and respond constructively.
- 3.7 Not impede other scholars from acquiring knowledge and skills.
- 3.8 Complete and submit your coursework on time.
- 3.9 Never misrepresent data, coursework, or information that could result in the awarding of a grade not reflective of your competence.

Principle 4

- **Be Accountable for Own Actions and Self-Care:**

As an RCSI postgraduate scholar, you must recognise the importance of self-care and take responsibility for your own health, especially if it may impact negatively on other people. You must commit to being accountable for your actions.

As a scholar you must:

- 4.1 Comply with all relevant RCSI health and safety requirements.
- 4.2 Be aware of any conditions of your funders or sponsors and abide by the conditions of your contracts and/or agreements.
- 4.3 Be accountable for the proper use of funding over which you have control.
- 4.4 Familiarise yourself with and abide by intellectual property rights; regulations; relevant contractual agreements regarding the disclosure of data and confidential information.
- 4.5 Be aware of your own health and how it impacts you and your academic, research and professional responsibilities.
- 4.6 Seek prompt and appropriate professional advice about your general well-being, i.e. your physical or mental health, or substance use or other issues which may impact your ability to complete your studies or interact with staff or colleagues.
- 4.7 Inform appropriate RCSI staff if you are being affected by a major life event that is affecting your studies e.g. bereavement.
- 4.8 Inform appropriate RCSI staff of any disability or medical condition that might affect your ability or role as a postgraduate scholar that might put research subjects at risk or have an impact on animal welfare.
- 4.9 Inform appropriate RCSI staff if you take medicines that may:
 - 4.9.1 Impair your judgement.
 - 4.9.2 Impact on the safety of others.
 - 4.9.3 Impact on your ability to use laboratory, research facilities or research equipment.
 - 4.9.4 Impact your ability to follow procedures.
- 4.10 Respect the confidentiality of your colleagues but appropriately disclose information of concern, to include information regarding 4.6 above as relevant to your colleagues.
- 4.11 Co-operate with formal investigations about yourself or others.



RCSI

Principle 5

- **Be aware of your obligations under the Code of Conduct and do not do anything which constitutes a breach of the Code:**

It is the responsibility of all scholars to make every reasonable effort to ensure that everything they do conforms with the principles laid down in the Code of Conduct.

As a scholar you must:

- 5.1 Ensure you are aware, apply and adhere to the principles of the Code of Conduct.
 - 5.1.1 Promote and support the principles of the Code of Conduct by example.
 - 5.1.2 Refrain from any activity that would negatively affect the reputation of the University.
 - 5.1.3 Report breaches of the Code of Conduct to the appropriate member of staff.

- 5.2 Obey the law.
 - 5.2.1 Personally and promptly disclose to the Associate Director for Academic Affairs the details of any criminal investigations;¹ charges for a criminal offence; pending prosecution for a criminal offence; conviction for a criminal offence (save for “spent” convictions) which may arise during your studies whether within or outside the Republic of Ireland

- 5.3 Comply with University policies, rules and regulations, and those of other organisations linked to your studies.
 - 5.3.1 Respect all University, and clinical and professional placement policies, procedures and property. Never willingly cause damage to such property, remove property from the premises in which it is located, or make use of property for personal reasons.
 - 5.3.2 Ensure that you are contactable
 - 5.3.3 Supply accurate information in response to lawful requests and update that information as necessary.
 - 5.3.4 Co-operate with honesty and openness in formal investigations about yourself or others.

¹ Criminal investigations include being arrested or interviewed under caution by a police officer whether in the Republic of Ireland or elsewhere